

Minutes 2011_07_20_VS_ meeting

Minutes of the
2011 NSS Vertical Section Meeting
July 20, 2011

The 2011 NSS Vertical Section meeting was held Wednesday, July 20, 2011 at the High School in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Executive Board members present were Chair Dick Mitchell, Secretary-Treasurer Bill Boehle, At-Large Executive Members Miriam Cuddington, Terry Mitchell (Vice Chairman), and Rory Tinston, Vertical Techniques Workshop Coordinator Terry Clark, Education/Training Coordinator Bruce Smith, and Contest Coordinator Bill Cuddington. Nylon Highway Editor Tim White could not attend the convention and Bruce Smith was designated as his proxy. Approximately 18 additional Vertical Section members were in attendance.

I. Meeting opened at 1:00 PM by Chair Dick Mitchell.

A. Announcements - Welcome to everyone who came. Agenda, minutes, and other information available in packet. Membership/Attendance roster circulated. Introduced EC members present.

II. Minutes of the Last Meeting - were published on the website and there were no amendments or changes. A motion was made and seconded and the minutes were accepted as published.

III. Officer's Reports:

A. Secretary's Report - Bill Boehle. See attached. Accepted as presented.

B. Treasurer's Report - Bill Boehle. See attached. No further discussion. Accepted as presented.

C. VS Symbolic Items - Bill Boehle. See Treasurer's Report for sales numbers. There was some discussion about how sales of back issues of the Nylon Highway were going. Bill Boehle stated that it was just slow and steady and that sales were slightly better with bundled sets of all issues still in print as compared to individual issues. Since back issues that still have stock remaining are not posted on the website, it was asked if there is anything we can do to hasten the reduction of the stock of back issues. It was suggested that we give an issue to each participant in the vertical workshop as a way to use up the old stock. The group consensus was that this was a good idea and it was agreed that this is how we would proceed.

D. Nylon Highway Editor's Report - Report given by Bruce Smith for Tim White. There was a recent article comparing Knot Break Strength vs Rope Break Strength. There were inconsistencies in the article as well as mixed up graphics. Bruce Smith contacted the Technical Director of the Cordage Institute to resolve these problems, however he received no response to his inquiries. The EC recently voted to remove the article from the Nylon Highway pending further review and resolution of the problems with the article.

IV. Committee Reports:

A. Contest Committee - Bill Cuddington. Thanks to the Colorado convention for the nice facilities for this year's contest. Thanks to PMI for donating two 600 foot lengths of EZ Bend Sport rope this year for the climbing contest. Thanks to all who help during the vertical contest, especially Ernie Coffman and the other racketteers who helped run the racks. We appreciate any help from section members and others with timing, pulling rope, running the rack, etc. Bill noted that several people inquired about the use of the spacers between the top bars of the long racks used for the climbs. He explained to them that they function to reduce heat and prevent glazing of the rope. The contest is not just a race, but also a learning laboratory to test climbing rigs and techniques. This year we had about 60 climbers over the

two days. Awards will be given out at 1:00 PM on Friday.

B. Vertical workshop - Terry Clark. This year we have 37 people signed up. Terry made a request for more help rigging and setting up the ropes on Monday mornings and for derigging on Thursdays after the workshop. It is a big job and more hands make the work easier on everyone. Thanks to PMI for their support of the vertical workshop. We are cutting up the contest ropes for use in the workshop. This way we are getting more use out of the donated ropes and have less gear to haul to the convention. Terry wants to recognize and thank Lynn Fielding (Co-Chair) who helps him run the vertical workshop. She makes his job easy. Terry pointed out that the JSS has been using some of our equipment with his permission for their training sessions. The JSS has a budget and has been slowly acquiring some of its own equipment. We have a good relationship with the JSS. Terry stated that the NSS has contacted him to ask if he wanted to make any changes to the \$25 price we charge for the vertical workshop. Terry feels that the \$25 is probably okay where it is but wanted to get some input from the Section. Secretary/Treasurer stated that barring some unusual expenses our budget (revenue vs. expenses) has been mostly in balance in recent years. We can always revisit the workshop fee if that situation were to change in the future. For now we will retain the \$25 workshop fee. There was some discussion about equipment replacement and Terry noted that some of our older ropes were being retired. Bruce Smith pointed out that, according to the Cordage Institute, life support ropes have about a 10 year maximum life.

C. Training/Education - Bruce Smith.

Bruce stated that he is about to embark on a series of updates to the Basic Training Course. There are updates to the information on harness hang syndrome, and in response to some recent accidents there is a need to update the training to address rappelling errors made when changing the number of bars used during a descent. Problems have also been observed with people engaging too few bars when locking off the rack. The problems occur when additional load is placed on the rack and the lockoff is removed. There will also be some updates to the course testing. Bruce needs feedback for local grottoes using the course to provide input for these and future updates. The updated information will be developed, field tested, and then distributed via the website.

It has been two years since we completed the Intermediate Course and made it available via download for no charge on the website. However, we have had no students register that they are starting the course or who have filed for a certificate of successful completion. This doesn't mean the material is not being used, it just means that we are unable to gauge its use. Gary Bush said that we will try to track the downloads of the course on the website.

D. Re-Belay Course / "Dial In Your Gear" Session - Gary Bush and John Woods. This year a steady stream of people showed up all day for the rebelay training. Terry Mitchell helped out all day with Gary. As in the past, most of the time was spent with people setting up and adjusting their systems. Dick Mitchell suggested that maybe this session would be better identified as the Re-belay and System Tuning session rather than the Re-belay Course. We might see some people struggle less in the climbing contest if their systems were better tuned and adjusted for them. It was well received by all who participated.

E. Awards Committee - Dick Mitchell/Bruce Smith. This year Lifetime Achievement Awards were presented to two deserving individuals. John Cole was recognized as the inventor of the rack. The award was presented by Bill and Miriam Cuddington before the entire Huntsville Grotto. The award was a surprise to John and there was a great response from those attending as there was a 5 minute standing ovation when the award was announced. There were tears all around. The second award was presented to Charlie Gibbs for his invention of the Gibbs ascender. The award was presented by Bruce Smith at a small gathering of family and friends. The presentation was arranged as a complete surprise to Charlie. He commented that he was humbled that anyone remembered him. Needless to say it was a very emotional event.

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F. Bylaws Committee - Bill Boehle and Terry Mitchell. Terry Mitchell reported that there were no new changes this year. If anyone has any suggestions for changes, they should contact either of us.

G. Web Page - Gary Bush webmaster. Gary reported that we are up-to-date and that Nylon Highway #56 should be posted shortly. He also reported that after consideration the EC voted to remove the password access to the Nylon Highway. Gary also reported that he has received many photos for the photo gallery on the website where we can display photos from past events. If anyone has photos of past meetings, contests, or other events, they should send them to Gary Bush to be included. Please identify dates, locations and people, if possible. If people have suggestions for other things they would like on the website, send Gary an email and we will see what can be done.

V. Old Business:

A. None.

VI. New Business:

A. Bill Cuddington introduced Steve Hudson who is the President of PMI who was able to join us today. The group acknowledged PMIs long time support of the Vertical Section with a round of applause.

B. Ray Sira was designated as the Section's onsite liason for the MayaCon 2012 NSS convention.

C. Dick Mitchell asked for feedback on several questions: (1) Our membership is about 250 out of over 10,000 NSS members---Should it be more and, if so, how would we get more people?; (2) Our leadership is aging---Should we be involving younger people, and how?; (3) Should we be increasing the distribution of the Nylon Highway, and how?; and (4) Should the Vertical Section try to get more publicity from means such as articles in the NSS News?

It was suggested that we use the Yahoo newsgroup as a means to alert members that new articles are available in the Nylon Highway. While not all VS members have signed up for the newsgroup, we could use it in this manner for those that choose to participate.

It was asked how do people become VS members. People can either sign our roster at an official event such as convention, send in an application that is available on the website, or to just send the Sec/Treas an email with their name and address saying they want to be a member. Membership is for 5 years and, when acknowledged, they are also given the opportunity to join our newsgroup.

Someone suggested using the NSS News as a means of notifying members that a new Nylon Highway is out. Gary Bush clarified that even IOs have to pay for notices in the NSS News.

Many organizations have aging membership. Younger people have many varied interests. Perhaps we need to sit down with some of them and talk about what would attract them to our group. What do we need to do or provide to involve them in our activities?

Can we make better use of the On Rope forum on CaveChat to promote membership and participation in our activities? Tim White is the moderator of that forum. There are more younger participants there who could be recruited for section membership. Tim needs to look into this.

It was suggested that some of the recent recognition awards would translate into a good short article for the NSS News. Bruce Smith said that was something that is being worked on.

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Membership in the past was hurt by non-timely publication of the Nylon Highway. This was compounded by the lack of articles being submitted to the editor. We have an interest in our material from many people in the caving community, as well as the search and rescue community, and other users of rope. We still have a need for people to submit material to the editor.

We need to interest people in safe vertical caving. Perhaps a series of columns or articles in the NSS News on Vertical Techniques and Tips would be helpful in educating people and recruiting new members.

It was suggested that our best way to be in contact with people is through education and training. There we can influence them to be safe vertical cavers and to convince them of the benefits of participating in our organization.

Steve Hudson asked us who our market is. Is it cavers or all SRT practitioners? There is a big difference between the two. There is a much bigger group of people out there than just cavers.

It was suggested that perhaps we should produce a short handout on vertical caving that could be given by grottos to new members. It could educate them on the proper training necessary to safely participate in vertical caving activities and to introduce them to the Vertical Section.

VII. Elections:

A. Secretary/Treasurer (1 year term) - Bill Boehle was nominated and reelected by acclamation.

B. At-Large Board Members (2 year term, 2 to be elected) - Miriam Cuddington, Rory Tinston, Ray Sira, and Mike Rusin were nominated. A ballot of the section members present was conducted. Miriam Cuddington and Ray Sira were elected by a majority of the votes cast. [Note: Current At-Large members Dick Mitchell and Terry Mitchell have 1 year remaining in their terms.]

VIII. Adjournment - Motion to adjourn was made and carried. Time of adjournment was approximately 2:35 PM.

[Additional note: Subsequent to the Meeting, the Board Members elected Dick Mitchell as Chair and Terry Mitchell as Vice Chair. The four appointed members were re-appointed to serve for another year. They are:

- * Contest Committee - Bill Cuddington
- * Vertical Techniques Workshop Committee - Terry Clark (Assistant: Lynn Fielding)
- * Education Committee - Bruce Smith
- * Nylon Highway Editor - Tim White

Respectfully submitted,
Bill Boehle

(Rev. 1)
To be approved at 2012 Convention meeting